

and employ the technique of “simul-climbing” to climb quicker on the easier sections. Neither of them had used this technique before.

Using a doubled 8.6 mm rope, they had at least one ice screw between them. The terrain was water ice, moderate angle. Brian was leading. With one screw in the ice, Greg stopped at the screw to wait for Brian to place a second ice screw before he removed the one he was at. Catching his crampon point on his bootstrap, Greg lost his balance and fell, pulling Brian with him. Sliding and bouncing down the ice, the single ice screw did hold their fall (the 17 cm, Yates Screamer had activated). Greg fell 13 meters while Brian fell 39 meters, and both ended up hanging side by side on the ice. Both seemed to be OK at this point, so Greg built an anchor where they were and lowered Brian down to the snow slope using an extra rope he had in his pack. Once at the base of the ice, Brian realized pain in his right hip would prevent him from standing, so a second climbing party used an ice anchor to lower Brian down the snow slope to the trail. Many nearby climbers assisted in getting Brian to the trail where he was carried out by litter. Later that evening, Brian was treated for his soft tissue injuries and released from the Androscoggin Medical Center.

### **Analysis**

While simul-climbing is a technique used for moving quickly over moderate terrain, it is also dangerous because a slip by the second could easily pull the leader off, as happened in this accident. We should have had more protection between us. This technique calls for abundant protection even on easy terrain as these points are the only “belay” for the climbers, at least two points of protection between climbers. Because the terrain was easy, I was more “relaxed” and didn’t have my axes planted well—they were dangling at my side—at the stance before the fall, which would’ve resulted in a stumble only. The leader should have his tools planted well and anchored to them while placing a screw, thus creating a temporary anchor for himself and partner. Even on easy terrain it is important to be constantly vigilant and to immediately have tools planted securely at stances, as portable belays. (Source: Greg Farrell)

*(Editors Note: Jeff Fongemie points out the following. “Easy ice is not always about the angle of the ice. The ice on Mount. Washington is often very brittle and even low angle ice can be difficult. If, at a Mountain Rescue Service meeting here in North Conway, you asked how many have taken falls on low angle ice, you might be surprised to see how many highly experienced mountaineers raise their hands.”)*

## **FALL ON ICE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION**

### **New Hampshire, Crawford Notch, Frankenstein Cliffs**

On December 30 Bob O’Brien paired up with Lisa Thompson for some ice climbing. Bob is an experienced ice climber of more than ten years and while Lisa has limited experience with ice climbing, she has many years of rock climbing experience. They had not climbed together before.

Bob set off for a lead of Cave Route (NEI 3) with Lisa as the belayer. Cave Route is a one pitch route that begins with a 30 foot section of 55 to 60 degree

ice followed by some vertical columns that are avoided by climbing around them on the left. Bob climbed to the top of the first section and placed an ice screw. Looking for a greater challenge, he headed up the 15-foot tall columns direct. Deciding the ice was too candled and poor in quality, he choose not to “waste time” attempting to place an ice screw, but instead climb to the top of the column and finish the climb. With his tools over the top of the column but feet still on the steep ice, his right tool came out of the ice, then his left tool also came out. Acting quickly, Bob was able to replace his left tool. Any feelings of safety melted as he “barn-doored” to the left and his left hand came out of the leash. With the tool remaining in the ice, he fell, pulling out his only ice screw along the way. Bob fell 40 feet to the ground. Nearby climbers, including a doctor and a paramedic, assisted in the half mile carry out using a litter from a rescue cache at the parking lot. Bob broke both his tibia and fibula of his left leg when his left foot caught the lower angle ice at the base of the column.

### **Analysis**

The main problem here is of the climber not placing adequate protection. Once on the column, Bob had three alternatives. First, stop and take the time to place good protection. Second, conclude that he could not (for any reason) place the protection and retreat. Or third, conclude that he could not (for any reason) place the protection, keep climbing and risk ground fall, hoping that he would not fall. Bob chose the third alternative, but fell. As ice climbers, we sometimes do not place protection as frequently as we do on rock in the summer relying on hopefully solid ice tool placements. The merits of this can be argued both ways. Nevertheless, placing protection infrequently enough so that ground-fall is a possibility is never a good option, as we cannot be certain that we will not fall. (Source: Bob O’Brian and Lisa Thompson)

## **FAULTY USE OF CRAMPONS and LOSS OF CONTROL—VOLUNTARY GLISSADE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT—NO ICE AX**

### **New Hampshire, Mount Washington, Tuckerman Ravine Trail**

On December 30 there were two separate accidents involving sliding with crampons. In the first incident, a party of two was descending the Summit Cone by glissading with crampons on their feet. One of the climbers snagged his crampon and broke his ankle. Other climbers on the scene aided his continued descent down the Lions Head trail. In the second accident, a party of two climbing the summit cone had crampons on their feet and no ice axes. One tripped and with no ax to self arrest with, slid 300 feet into a rock outcrop badly dislocating his ankle in the process. Local Mountain Rescue Service member Brad White was nearby and assisted in the rescue using his ax as a splint. With a litter from the Mount. Washington Observatory on the summit, he was carried down Lion Head Trail.

### **Analysis**

Snowstorms this winter had been ending as wet snow or rain followed by cold